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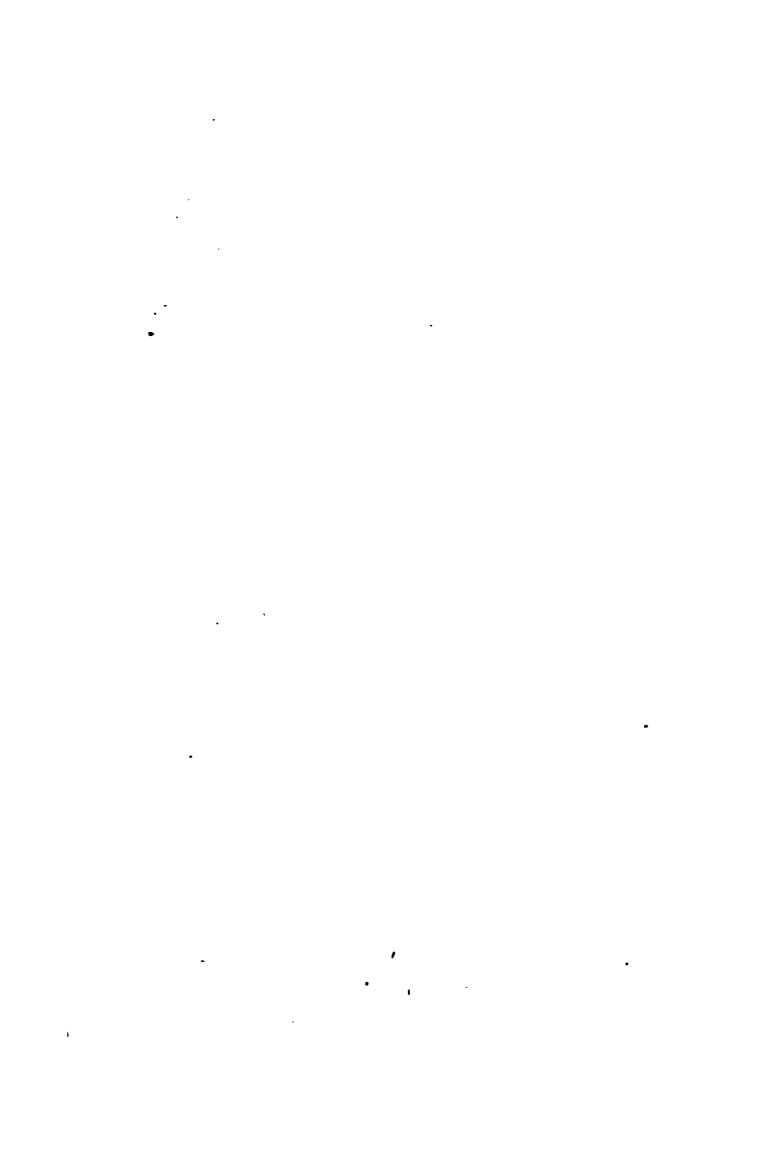
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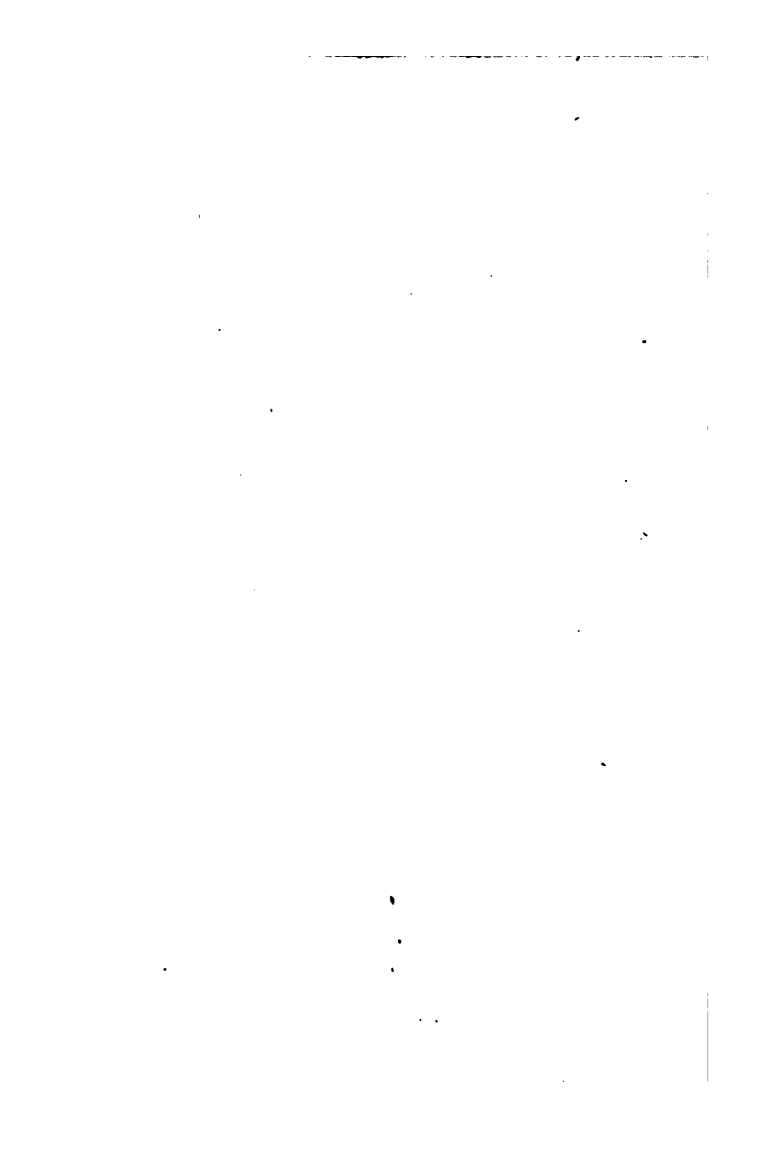
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INFANT BAPTISM,

AND THE

1

MODE OF ADMINISTERING IT.

BY

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"Jesu answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—JOHN III. 5.

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INFANT BAPTISM,

&c.

THERE are in the present days, as there were in the time of the Apostles, and as there have been ever since, numbers taking upon themselves to teach, who have no sound understanding of what they say, nor whereof they affirm: and wherever such are found, they will never fail of meeting with many negligent of our Lord's warning, "To take heed how they hear," many always ready to listen to, and be misled by them.

Novel and erroneous opinions upon religious subjects, in consequence, perpetually spring up from time to time, obtaining a certain degree of acceptance; and during their prevalence, it is surprising to see how reason and common sense are set aside in their support; arguments against them not weighed, nor even listened to; and the Scriptures themselves, in all those passages which controvert the current delusion, distorted from their evident sense and inten-

tion. Texts, plainly in opposition, are, according to an expression much in use on such occasions, "*got over*," either by perverting their meaning, or altogether discarding their authority. Other texts, which have no real bearing on the subject, are often pressed into their service, by a process, which is called "drawing from them" some sense or doctrine which they were evidently never intended to convey. And thus is the Scripture used, not as the rule by which we are to try our opinions, but as the advocate by which we are to maintain them; not as the origin and teacher of truth, but as the supporter of the notions and speculations which men themselves have adopted.

Would we have an example of this; an instance how readily many will receive, and how pertinaciously maintain an opinion, founded neither on reason, evidence, nor Scripture? I do not know one more in point, or one more singular and remarkable in all its circumstances and bearings, than the error which forbids the baptism of infants; and, considering in how many points the doctrine of free grace is impeached by it, it may perhaps rather be called a heresy than an error. There is a numerous sect which denies the lawfulness of this practice; and not only so, but insists upon its notions being received as a most important and undoubted doctrine of the Christian faith. The whole subject, when closely looked into, presents us with a curious and striking instance, how little reason will avail, when prejudice has once taken possession of the mind; how

partiality to our own speculations will thrust the judgment from its seat and office, and hoodwink the eyes from seeing the light that would dispel the mists and clouds of error. For the arguments in support of infant baptism, when they are fairly weighed, are absolutely overpowering: even on the most superficial view, all circumstances appear to be in its favour. There never has been any authority produced from Scripture to show that it is not in exact accordance with the whole scheme of redemption in Christ Jesus. It can be proved to agree exactly with all the Jewish notions on religious subjects, and to harmonize in all points with the teaching of the Old Testament. It can be shown that it prevailed universally in all the earlier ages of the Christian Church. All those great and holy men, whom God honoured at the time of the Reformation, by choosing them as his instruments for drawing out and recovering the Gospel truth from the mass of corruption and superstition under which it had lain hid and buried for ages; all, after patient and diligent investigation, were satisfied that "the baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." All those holy and learned men who have succeeded them, whose praise with theirs is in all the Churches, both at home and abroad, after a full discussion of the subject, and after every argument that can be brought against it has had its attentive hearing, and strict examination, are unanimous in approving the decision to which their

forerunners had come. The prohibition is quite a modern innovation of not more than three hundred years standing, out of the eighteen hundred years and more which have passed since the first preaching of the Gospel; and it is known also that this new doctrine did not arise from teachers sent from God, but from some of the wildest fanatics, and most pestilent corruptors of Christian truth, that have ever used the name of Christ to disgrace his religion. There seems every thing against this tenet of theirs, and nothing in its favour, when the subject is even but slightly examined; and yet, notwithstanding, it greatly prevails, and is pertinaciously defended, not perhaps so much by reasoning, as by confident assertion: and in general, as far as my experience goes, by a refusal to give a serious and candid attention to the arguments by which it may be refuted, arguments for the most part not requiring much research to find, nor much pains to understand. It may seem surprising that the error has not given way to the abundant proofs by which it has been so often refuted. But the only way in which its continuance can be accounted for is, by reflecting, as stated above, that prejudice cannot be reasoned with; that self-confidence and partiality to its own speculations and "foregone conclusions," prevent the understanding from fairly examining the foundations on which they are built. This little tract, therefore, is not so much intended for those who have already adopted these notions, as to put others on their guard against

being misled by them. For many a person may be prevented from falling into an error, who can never be recovered from it, after it has once got hold of him; and particularly in religious errors there seems always to be something which clouds the understanding, and deprives it of its reasoning powers.

If it be asked, why I should attempt to say anything further upon a point, which has already at different times been so much discussed and so fully established; I have only this reason to give, that learned and excellent as are many of the treatises, showing the propriety of infant baptism and its exact agreement with the word of God; the clearness of the proof itself has been somewhat confused by the numerous arguments, and the mass of learned evidence brought forward in its support:—evidence, which, for the most part, they, for whose use it is intended, are not very capable of comprehending, from being unacquainted with the times and circumstances of those early witnesses. And the authorities themselves are often viewed with much prejudice and suspicion, the latter perhaps not entirely in all cases without reason. Now the whole propriety of infant baptism can only rest at last upon this ground: Is it a practice enjoined by the Scriptures? “If so,” I think every one has a fair right to say, “If so, let it be proved from the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone.” It undoubtedly can be so proved, and then we may safely refer to the unanimous practice of Christians in all ages,

as a confirmation, that we have rightly understood the Scriptures to which we appeal.

In this treatise, I propose to confine myself to the proof of these two points :

I. That in accordance with the Scriptures, infants ought to be baptized.

II. That nothing is directed in the Scriptures respecting the mode of baptizing, whether by dipping, sprinkling, or pouring, and it is perfectly immaterial which of these three modes is adopted.

First then, in accordance with the Scriptures, infants ought to be baptized.

In proving this proposition, I would call attention to the six following assertions, which can all of them be fully supported from Scripture.

1. Covenants are frequently entered into by God with children, and also parents are allowed to pledge their children to the performance of certain duties and conditions, evidently with the Divine sanction and permission.

2. It is evident from the direct testimony of Scripture that children form an express part of the Christian covenant, at least, so far as they are the children of believing parents.

3. The anabaptist objections taken from the Scripture, are for the most part misapprehensions of certain passages, to which they give a sense and application which they were never intended to bear.

4. In consequence of the fall, all mankind being in a lost state by the breach of the first covenant, and God of his mercy having entered into a new

covenant with them, it follows from the very nature of the case, that infants must be members of this new covenant.

5. Many Scripture expressions throughout the New Testament take it for granted that children are baptized into the Gospel covenant.

6. It is no well-founded objection to infant baptism to say: Why is it not more frequently and expressly mentioned in the Scriptures?

7. There is also an argument, not indeed from Scripture, but from common sense, which will prove, that the practice of infant baptism prevailed in the time of the Apostles, as well as ever since.

These let us take in their order.

1. Covenants are frequently entered into by God with children, and also parents are allowed to pledge their children to the performance of certain duties and conditions, evidently with the Divine sanction and permission.

One of the earliest instances we meet with of this, is in the rite of circumcision, which is mentioned as the seal of a covenant entered into, not only with Abraham but with his children also. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 10). What was the nature and object of this circumcision, which, as our Lord tells us, was "not of Moses, but of the fathers" (John viii. 22), we shall have occasion to speak, when we point out its relation to Christian Baptism. At present it is only brought forward as one instance

of the assertion, that covenants may be made by God with children, even before they know anything themselves either of good or evil : and not being capable of acting themselves, their parents or guardians may act for them. This is evident enough in the case of circumcision : God expressly declares that He enters into a covenant with the children, and that the seal of the covenant on their part is circumcision, which covenant with its seal, by reason of their tender age, they themselves are not able to assent to or perform. The promises, therefore, on their part must be made, and the act performed for them by their sureties : and when they come to age, they themselves must perform what the outward act of circumcision meant, and their sureties promised.

So again (Deut. i. 39), God makes a promise to the children, that they should go into the land to possess it. "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge either of good or evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give the land, and they shall possess it." Now in the fifth chapter of the same book, Moses expressly says of this promise, that it was a *covenant* with the children. "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive unto this day." So again in Deut. xxix. 11, 12, Moses tells the whole nation that they are "all that day standing before the Lord, with all the men of Israel, with their *little ones*, and with their wives, that they

should enter into covenant with the Lord, and into his oath, which the Lord maketh with thee this day." And it is not merely for temporal blessings, or referring only to the promised land, but it refers also to spiritual blessings. And accordingly in this very discourse, the Lord promises as a part of his covenant, that "the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of *thy seed*, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

In fact, in all the national meetings of the Jews as the people of the Lord, the children formed a part of the congregation, and were considered as included in their number, with whom the Lord was entering into covenant, and who were performing religious duties to Him. Thus we read (Num. iii. 28), "In the number of all the males, from a *month old* and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, *keeping the charge of the sanctuary.*" So also (2 Chron. xx. 13), when Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, it is said, that "Judah stood before the Lord, with *their little ones*, their wives and children." So again in Joel: when the prophet is summoning the nation to a general fast and congregation for imploring the mercy of God, he says, "Assemble the elders, gather the children, *those that suck the breast*," and then calls them "the people of the Lord." And reasonably so; for all the promises of God, whether to his Church amongst the Jews before the coming of Christ, or to his Church elected from the Gentiles after that event, all his

promises and all his covenants have relation to the children as well as to the parents ; or, as St. Peter expresses it, "the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 39).

It is plain from many places in Scripture, that these covenants, into which God is said to enter with his people and their children, are properly and strictly covenants with the children themselves, as well as with the parents. Not merely promises but covenants, and therefore containing in them duties which they themselves are bound to perform ; and a breach of which is considered a breach of promise committed by themselves, although they were not able at the time, on account of their infancy, to perform in their own person that to which they had been pledged. Thus, for instance, in the covenant with Abraham, and with his seed as contained in him, it is declared, "the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh is not circumcised, shall be cut off from my people : he *hath broken my covenant*" (Gen. xvii. 14). It is expressly said by Moses, when he is prophetically declaring the miseries which should afterwards fall upon the Jews for their sins, that they would fall as a punishment for the breach of "the covenant of the Lord God of thy fathers, which he made with them, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. xxxix. 25). And this also the Psalmist expressly urges upon them as their sin, that "they kept not the

covenant of God, and refused to walk in his ways" (Ps. lxxviii. 10).

Here are express and direct testimonies from Scripture, declaring, in the most plain and unambiguous language, that God does not shut out infants from the covenants which He mercifully makes with his people. Now a covenant is not a covenant of one alone, it is between two; and since infants are one of these parties, how can they enter into it, but by sureties and proxies? Hence it clearly follows that they are bound by what their sponsors have covenanted in their name. In proof of which, we have produced the above examples to show how God claims from them the performance of duties, which, by his command, others had promised for them.

Nay more, we meet with several instances in Scripture, where this power of binding persons, unconscious of the pledges made for them, to the performance of sundry duties, is delegated to much inferior authority than the Divine: as, for example, where parents have laid injunctions upon their posterity yet unborn, and have bound them to the after-performance of special acts, with the evident sanction of the Almighty. Thus Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, that they should carry up his bones with them, when God visited his people, and brought them out of Egypt (Gen. l. 25). And the Israelites, many generations after, clearly thought themselves bound by this oath, which their fathers had made for them, and in their name, and obeyed it accordingly.

So Hannah promises for Samuel, that if the Lord would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor should come upon his head (1 Sam. i. 11); and we know how the Lord accepted this vow, and how Samuel considered himself bound by it. So again of the Rechabites: the father charged his descendants to observe certain ordinances, which all for many generations obeyed; and the prophet tells us of the blessing which God pronounced upon his family and posterity for ever on account of their obedience (Jer. xxxv. 18, 19).

To the same purport, we find it recorded in the book of Esther, that "the Jews ordained and took upon them, and *upon their seed*, that they would keep these two days according to the appointed time every year, and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city" (Esther ix. 27, 28); and the same is observed by them down to this very time.

I have mentioned these few instances, and many more might be given, to show that children, before they have either knowledge or choice, are considered, not only the subjects of blessings and promises on the part of God: but as, on their side also, actually entering into engagements with Him: though these engagements have been made for them without their knowledge and consent. Yet they nevertheless stand bound by them, and are liable to punishment for the non-observance of them: to punishment also on this special ground,

that they have broken a covenant into which they themselves had been admitted. And why should this be thought strange? We see it every day in human affairs. In the management of property, the infant, when he comes to age, is bound by the act of the guardian during his minority. He is obliged to fulfil contracts made in his name, although made at a time when he had neither knowledge nor understanding about them. So also with respect to religious engagements; urge upon any grown up person as an aggravation of sin, that he is breaking a solemn vow and promise that he had made to God in his infancy by his sponsors; will you ever hear him attempt to defend himself, by saying, that he is not bound by such vow and promise, because they were made without his knowledge and consent? Here we have the common sense of mankind, as it were by instinct, declaring with one voice, that engagements made in infancy are binding, when proceeding from proper authority.

But of all covenants, there is none which presents such evident reasons on the face of it, as does the Christian, why infants should be admitted as parties to it; reasons, arising from their very nature and condition, as part of God's creation, and made to depend, both as to life and death, upon events, with which in the first instance they themselves could have nothing to do. Death in fact being introduced by the fall of man in Adam, and life restored by the redemption purchased by Christ. And certainly, in this point of view, it

would seem a strange and inconsistent thing, that children, who thus from their very birth are placed under a new covenant, and are required from the very first to perform the duties of it, and to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, should not be permitted to receive the sign by which the promises and mercies of God are sealed to them. For this is a matter which admits of no doubt: that,

2. From the direct testimony of Scripture, infants form an express part of the Christian covenant, at least so far as they are the children of believing parents.

To hold the contrary, to forbid them to be admitted by an outward sign and sacrament, is, as I said before, an error of quite a modern origin: for since the first calling and separation of a Church in Abraham, not very far short of four thousand years ago, it was never heard of, until about three hundred years before our time, that infants were not to be admitted into this covenant, and receive the appropriate seal of it. For what was the covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was the seal? Not a temporal covenant that he should in his posterity possess the promised land, or that they should be more in number than the stars of heaven, or the sand on the sea-shore. "They are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for temporal promises." The covenant with Abraham referred solely to the Christian covenant; the faith into which the children of Abraham were circumcised, is the very

same into which the Christian children are baptized. This admits of no doubt. St. Paul's words upon this subject are too express to allow of being misinterpreted; he distinctly asserts the commandment of God, that infants should be brought before him to enter into his covenant—the covenant, that is, of “the righteousness which is by faith,” or the Christian covenant. Having laid down and settled the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, justification by faith alone; having expressly stated that it was thus that Abraham was justified, he adds, “he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised” (Rom. iv. 11). Now, although the covenant and promise are undoubtedly to the seed of Abraham, as well as to himself, and the seal also to be impressed upon them—“the seal of the righteousness which is by faith;” yet, since faith is required of them as well as of him, if nothing more had been related than this, perhaps, as the modern anabaptist of baptism, so might the ancient Jew have asserted of circumcision, that it ought not to take place until the person could exercise faith and declare his belief. “But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways,” as we see in this and all the other parts of salvation by grace. If we turn to the 17th chapter of Genesis we find, “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and your seed after you: every *manchild* among you shall be circumcised, every *manchild* in his generation;

and the uncircumcised manchild,—that soul shall be cut off from my people ; he hath broken my covenant.” Now Christ has taken no privilege from his Church by his coming on earth amongst them, though He has added many ; and if infants in the time of Abraham were to be admitted into the covenant of the righteousness which is by faith, on what ground are they now to be shut out ? Are their privileges less since the coming of Christ, than they were before ? Has He come to take away blessings, to narrow the number of those who are to be members of his Church, and children of the faithful Abraham ? Is this the way in which we are to look for the fulfilment of that promise, “ I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea-shore ; for a father of many nations have I made thee ? ” The calling of Abraham was not to the observance of a ceremonial law, but, as we have seen, to the obtaining salvation by grace ; to the justification and the righteousness which is by faith : and it is in this view of the subject that our Lord tells us, “ Circumcision is not of Moses, but of the fathers ” (John vii. 22), pointing to a covenant and Church much more extended than that of the Jews alone.

Now this covenant and these promises of God in Abraham, St. Paul expressly tells us, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not take away : and if the law could not, can we suppose that the Gospel will ? This would

be to make Christ a less gracious lawgiver than Moses, and especially blotting out one of those beautiful and benevolent marks of his character; his love of children, and willingness to receive them as members of his kingdom. We all know "how displeased He was at those who would have kept them from Him; how ready to show by his outward gesture and deed his good-will towards them;" how distinct and clear in at once claiming them for his own, and acknowledging them as a part of his Church and family. For the action, as related in the Gospel, can be no less than this: it is an authoritative and ecclesiastical act, which can only be exercised by the great High Priest of our profession, and those to whom He has entrusted this ministry and duty. It is not only that He took these children up in his arms, but He laid his hands upon them and blessed them. Whatever other office or ministry, or whatever further grace might be bestowed upon them by this imposition of hands, this at least is clear, that Church membership must have been conferred by it. For this was an appointed ordinance, both in the Old and the New Testament, for consecrating to the service of God, and a means and instrument of conveying spiritual blessings.

Let us only consider a few instances related in the Scriptures, and surely by all just inference we shall see, that our Lord's thus laying his hands on these children, was not a mere outward form, but an authoritative dispensation of blessings to his own subjects. Thus we read (Numb. xxvii. 18—23), "The Lord said unto Moses, Take thee

Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him, and give him a charge, as the Lord commanded." And so again (Deut. xxxiv. 9), "Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hand upon him." So in the New Testament, in the ordination of deacons (Acts vi. 7), "whom they set before the Apostles, and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them;" and again (1 Tim. iv. 14): "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, and by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Now will any one dare to say that our Lord, the great Head of the Church, Himself using the ordinance which He had appointed, and thus, according to his own declaration, "fulfilling all righteousness," was merely performing an outward ceremony, merely expressing a benevolent wish for the welfare and salvation of these infants? Will any one deny that the great High Priest of our profession actually bestowed upon them the blessings which He pronounced? Such blessings were certainly not earthly blessings, for He declares them to be members of his kingdom, which we know not to be a kingdom of this world. The blessings, therefore, which He bestowed upon these infants were spiritual blessings. Do not let us think that there is any weight to be attached to such objections as these: "How can these things be?" "How can infants receive spiritual grace?" See what the fact is, as related in the Scriptures, and humbly receive what they say; and then consider how directly opposite all these

sayings and doings of Christ are to that uncharitable teaching, which would drive all children from Him: will not allow them to be a part of his family and congregation: would set aside that covenant which He had made with them before his incarnation, and leave them as no other than the children of wrath and heirs of destruction.

And this consideration of the church-membership of infants, will lead us to examine some of the objections taken against their baptism on account of certain passages which are frequently quoted as inconsistent with this practice.

I think it can easily be shown,

3. That the anabaptists objections taken from the Scripture are misapprehensions founded upon certain expressions, to which they give a sense and application which they were never intended to bear.

The following important points revealed to us in the Scriptures, concerning our connexion with Abraham, admit of no doubt, and therefore, one would hope, of no dispute. It was in him that a visible Church was first called and separated from the rest of the world; he was the father of the faithful, and the Church was with him during his residence in a land not his own; with his seed in the wilderness; with his seed in the promised land. And this same Church is still remaining unto this very day, and all we who are called by the name of Christ, form a part of it; for God, who is able of the very stones to raise up children unto Abraham, has expressly declared, that "they

which are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. iii. 7). The foundation upon which the Church before the coming of Christ was built, was faith in the Redeemer; and the promises were spiritual and eternal, not worldly and temporal. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or his seed by the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. iv. 13). "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all; as it is written: I have made thee a father of many nations" (Rom. iv. 16, 17). We are not a new stock, and proceeding from a new root, but are branches grafted in, and with some of the natural branches, viz. those Jews, who with the Apostles were converted to Christianity, partake of "the root and fatness" of the original plant (Rom. xi. 17). The doctrine which gives life to us, is the same by which Abraham himself lived, the doctrine of "the righteousness which is by faith."

Now this consideration, if we will attentively consider it, forms at once a complete answer to the common anabaptist objections drawn from some expressions in the Scriptures, which were meant to refer only to the conversion and consequent baptism of grown up persons; and are misapplied when any thing relating to the case of infant baptism is attempted to be deduced from them.

From adult converts, of course, it is required that they themselves, in their own persons, should make a solemn declaration of repentance, and an open profession of faith before they are baptized. All such expressions therefore as these, "Repent, and be baptized" (Acts xi. 38); "They that gladly received the word were baptized" (Acts xi. 41); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 15, 16), apply to them, and to them only, and form no objection whatever to the received practice of the Church with respect to infants. For the appointment of circumcision to Abraham and to *his seed*, as a seal of the righteousness which is by faith, is at once an answer to all the arguments against infant baptism, which can be drawn from passages of this kind. Circumcision was a sacrament amongst the Jews exactly agreeing with baptism amongst Christians, "The outward visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." So the word of God itself declares of it, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of man but of God" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). So to the same purport, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deut. x. 16). And again, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy

seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. xxx. 6).

Now, looking at circumcision in this point of view, regarding it as the seal of a spiritual covenant, what objection can be urged against infant baptism, which will not apply with equal force against infant circumcision? And yet God, in appointing this rite to Abraham and his *infant* offspring, declares, that they who despise this covenant shall "be cut off from amongst his people" (Gen. xvii. 14). The circumcision of grown up persons converted to the true religion before the coming of Christ, would have been very similar to the baptism of grown up converts after it, and would equally have required a profession of repentance for sins committed, and a declaration of faith in the true God. This would not have affected the question of the circumcision of their infants, as partakers of the covenant which God had made with them and their children. The likeness between the two cases is so exact, that whatever objection applies to the one, applies equally to the other, and is the same, in fact, as objecting to a direct ordinance of God. It is, in truth, making ourselves wiser than He, by finding reasons, why those should not be admitted as members of "the covenant of the righteousness which is by faith," whom He has declared are to be so considered.

The next point I proposed to establish is this :

4. In consequence of the fall, all mankind being lost by the breach of the first covenant, and God, of his mercy, having entered into a new

covenant with them, it follows, from the very nature of the case, that infants must be members of this new covenant, and therefore may be sealed with its seal.

In all cases where God has spoken, it becomes us not to reason, but to obey. And in general all speculation will lead us into error; nor are there many greater marks of folly, than attempting to be wise above what is written. But there is one view of the baptismal covenant arising from the fall of man, which will convey, to the plainest understanding, a convincing proof that infants may be rightly dedicated to God as their Redeemer, by whom they are admitted into a new covenant, before they have done either good or evil. In the fall of Adam, the covenant by which man was entitled to life and happiness came to an end. All his children also perished in him, became sentenced to death and destruction. As such they are born children of wrath and heirs of condemnation. The covenant of life, "this do and thou shalt live," they could not perform, and therefore under this covenant death is their portion. What hope therefore is there for any infant, and in what condition does it stand merely as a child of Adam? But God in his mercy has made a fresh covenant in Christ the new Adam, so that henceforth men are to live, not by works, but by faith in Him. This then is the state in which the infant now stands, dead in the former Adam, but admitted to another covenant of life in the new : and it can only be as a member of this second covenant, that the salvation of any one dying

in infancy can be looked for. Surely then, the infant state being thus changed, being thus brought under a new covenant, before it had done either good or evil, no valid reason can be given, why it may not be presented before God to receive its sign and seal, with prayer, that as a member of this new covenant it may fulfil the duties of it, and obtain in it life and immortality. It is nothing here to the purpose to say, we have no proof, that whilst this baptism by water takes place, there is also that conversion of heart, without which no man may enter into the kingdom of heaven. The same would be just as good an objection to the baptism of grown-up persons ; for we are none of us judges of this, but only He who is the searcher of all hearts. This however has nothing to do with the case here, which is that of a new covenant for all mankind, to which all may be admitted, and in which they who are lost, are lost, not for the sin of Adam and the broken covenant in him, but for want of faith in Christ, which is the breach of the new covenant, in which life and immortality are again brought to light. Not that this is the whole of baptism, but we argue assuredly from it to this extent at least,—that as infants were comprehended under the first covenant, and stood in Adam or fell in him by that, without having themselves done either good or evil ; so may they without any merit or works of their own, but solely through the mercy of God, and the merits of Christ, by his atonement and satisfaction, be admitted into a

new covenant, whilst they are unable to act for themselves; be grafted into a new stock, and become, even whilst infants, component parts of that mystical body of which Christ is the head. And if they thus actually become members of this new covenant, who can deny that they should be sealed with its seal?

In confirmation of this we shall find, that

5. Scripture expressions throughout the New Testament take it for granted, that children are baptized into the Christian covenant.

Here we may first observe, that there is nothing in the expressions calling upon men "To repent, and be baptized;" and "Go ye, and teach all nations¹," or rather, as the original expression

¹ With regard to this passage, we meet with a singular instance amongst the anabaptists, how prejudice will attach weight to an argument which seems in their favour, and reject the very same argument when it makes against them. They often urge this in their support: "The Evangelist tells us, 'Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them,' &c.; here," say they, "you see He directs teaching first, and baptizing after." But show them that this reasoning as far as it goes is against them: for the passage really is, "Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and *teaching* them to observe," &c.: so that in fact, the baptizing is put first, and the teaching second, and they at once refuse to attach any weight to the argument; as in truth it deserves none. But it is an instance how prejudice is stronger than reason.

There might be made a considerable collection of texts which are often quoted from the English translation in a sense to which the original Scripture gives no support.

is, "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" but what is still taking place amongst our foreign missions. Wherever the Gospel is preached to the heathen, there also are precisely these directions given to the missionaries that are sent amongst them. These expressions, in all such cases, are just as applicable now as they were when first uttered, and yet by no means exclude the practice of infant baptism. The instances related in Scripture of

Thus, for the necessity of inward holiness, how often is this passage produced, "The queen's daughter is all glorious *within*?" which really means, within the palace, from which she is to be brought forth to the king with joy and gladness.

So again, "I know nothing by myself;" is often quoted to show the natural inability of man, which, though true enough, is not what St. Paul was thinking of. The word "by," is here used in the old, and now obsolete sense of "against;" "I know nothing against myself," is the meaning the translators intended to convey.

For another instance, how often is it gravely asserted that the Scriptures foredoom the servitude of all the race of Ham, because it is said, "Noah awoke, and knew what his younger son had done unto him?" and the doctrine once established, has, it is to be feared, helped in some degree towards its practical application. Yet the younger son here is literally the little son, the grandson, *le petit fils*, of the French, and refers solely to Canaan; whereas some of the descendants of Ham have formed the greatest monarchies on earth.

Many similar instances might be given, and would serve to show how necessary it is to consult the original Scriptures, before we decide upon the meaning of any doubtful passage

actual baptism are but few : and yet in these few cases, we shall find, for the most part, that the expressions imply or take for granted that children were included amongst the baptized. Thus falling in and agreeing with our own practice in a most remarkable manner, and not admitting of any other application, without evidently wresting and twisting the terms made use of, and so distorting them, that they cannot properly be fitted into their place. As for example, “He and *all his* were straightway baptized” (Acts xvi. 33); “She was baptized, and her household” (Acts xvi. 15); “I baptized the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor. i. 16). Here we see plainly enough what was the practice in the Apostles’ time, and what is therefore the true practice still. All this also is in exact agreement with the directions given by God at the original covenant of circumcision, which always comprehended the whole household, when the head of it had been converted to the faith. “He that is born in thine house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” (Gen. xvii. 13). These expressions respecting circumcision and baptism throw mutual light upon each other, and show that the practice in each case with respect to infants was similar. And certainly such a practice exactly agrees with all our notions of free grace; to forbid infant baptism is to pluck a flower from that crown, and has a great tendency to make salvation depend

upon personal merits and works, as the effective cause of our admission into the Christian covenant. Its bearing and inclination toward the disparagement of the doctrine of original sin is very evident. Nor has he been a wise workman, who has fitted into the former garment this new piece which agrees so ill with the old. Indeed, in matters of religion, wherever we hear of novelty, we may be sure that we shall meet with but little of the solidity of truth.

The next point I wish to establish is this :

6. It is no well-founded objection against infant baptism, to say, Why is it not more frequently and expressly mentioned in the Scripture ?

The commandment once given for the admission of infants into covenant with God, there never seems to have arisen any doubt or hesitation about it, to give occasion for its being renewed or even mentioned again. It is in this respect like the observance of the sabbath, not a Mosaical law only, but a patriarchal institution. And as far as we know, there never was an instance in which the propriety, either of the one or the other, was ever called into question in the Scripture times. Each of these duties was admitted by all, without any dispute or difference of opinion. Accordingly, you no where find in the New Testament, any express commandment to keep the sabbath-day holy, any more than you do to admit infants to the Christian covenant by baptism, the covenant, that is, of "the righteousness which is by faith,"

and into which the children of the patriarchs were directed to be admitted by circumcision. On the very same ground that you deny infant baptism, because the New Testament does not expressly direct it, you may also deny the obligation to observe the sabbath.

A minister in these days, when preaching on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, always enforces on his hearers their bounden duty to come and partake of it. St. Paul, when speaking very fully on the manner of celebrating it, and giving many instructions respecting its nature and the observance of it, does not say anything of the Christian duty of attendance. And for this reason: in his days no one, who pretended to be a Christian, would ever have dreamt of absenting himself from the Lord's table, so that any exhortation on the subject would have been unnecessary and uncalled for. Just so in the case both of baptism and the observance of the sabbath; an acknowledged duty, an universal practice, would not necessarily present any occasion either for remark or comment.

We are to remember also, that the Gospel was first preached to the Jews, and especially, therefore, would this practice of admitting infants fall in with all their religious notions, without calling forth any express mention or observation. It would have been a great stumbling-block to a Jew, to tell him that now the Messiah was come, who had been so long foretold, so earnestly looked for by all the holy and devout of his nation, one con-

sequence of the fulfilment of his desires and prayers was, that his own religious privileges were lessened by it ; that his children, who had been admitted into the covenant of the righteousness which is by faith in a Saviour who was yet to come, were shut out of it now He was come ; that Christ had taken from the faithful children of Abraham, from the true Israel of God, those gracious promises which had been made before his coming, not only to the fathers, but to the children with them. This is the teaching of the anabaptists, but it is directly opposed to the teaching of the Apostles, and equally contrary to their practice. And here we may observe, that the objection often brought forward to show that infants were not baptized in the time of the Apostles, because their baptism is not expressly mentioned, so far from being an argument against the fact, is on the contrary a very strong proof in its favour. Can we suppose the Jews to have been so careless about their own privileges as children of Abraham, or so regardless of the covenanted rights of their own offspring, as to have allowed them thus to be set aside and passed over without struggle, remonstrance, or complaint ? This silence on the subject can only be accounted for by their receiving baptism according to St. Paul's expression, as " the circumcision made without hands," the seal by which infants were admitted into covenant with God equally after the coming of Christ as before ; and in that case, there were so many points of resemblance between the two, as to afford no more

reason why particular instances of Christian baptism should be mentioned in the New Testament, than of infant circumcision in the Old. We are sure the latter was never omitted, and yet, excepting at its first institution in Abraham, and its renewal under Moses and Joshua, where do you find any account of its actual performance?

Now what took place in circumcision? In the case of a proselyte, or the infant of unknown or heathen parents who had fallen into their hands, the Jews first baptized, and then circumcised them, and at the same time gave them a name. In the case of a Jewish child the baptism was omitted, as the whole race was considered to have been baptized in the persons of their fathers; and it is in allusion to this doctrine that St. Paul tells them, that "all their fathers were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Baptism, therefore, was omitted with the Jewish child, unless it were a female, but it was circumcised and named. A female child was baptized and named. In Christian baptism, therefore, there was nothing in the outward form so different as to call for any particular notice. Instead of circumcision, the form of baptizing "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," was used, the name was given as before, and all proceeded as a matter of course amongst those who had always been familiar with the gracious covenant to which they had been admitted by God.

In like manner, the way in which the baptism of whole families and households is spoken of in

Scripture, agrees exactly with the view which a Jew would naturally take of this covenant. Let the anabaptists consider those passages in which family and household baptism are mentioned, and then say, whether their own practice and the Scripture accounts agree together. It is in vain to say, that all the households mentioned in the Scriptures consisted of grown-up persons: there is not a shadow of proof of it; and who will believe that several households are thus found at hazard, not one of which contained a single infant? Nor again, is it any thing to the purpose to say, that only the grown-up persons in them were baptized, just as we read, "himself believed and all his house." For this latter expression means no more than that the whole family was converted to Christianity. It does not mean to assert the true belief of every individual in it, but only that the family now professed the Christian faith, and that the children would of course be brought up as believers. The infants, therefore, in this expression, are as much included, as they are in the case of a nation, when it is spoken of as "acknowledging the Lord," as, "a chosen people unto the Lord." This mode of speaking, therefore, is no argument against children being comprehended in it, on any supposition; and still less when we hear the Apostle declaring of the children of parents, only one of whom is a Christian, that they are "holy and not unclean." Holy and unclean here have a congregational meaning, and can signify nothing but admission or

rejection from the Christian covenant and congregation : the admission into which could only be by baptism. This also is in exact agreement with the Old Testament, where the children are called "a godly seed" (Mal. ii. 15. Ezra ix. 2.) Here, then, we see that St. Paul, as well as the prophets of old, puts a difference between the children of believing and unbelieving parents ; and in what does the difference consist, but that the one are admissible by baptism to become a part of the Christian congregation, members of Christ's Church, limbs of his body, which the others are not ?

But whilst we are upon this subject, arguing from the silence of Scripture upon certain points, let us not pass over this, which surely forms a strong presumption in our favour. You can nowhere find throughout Scripture, any, even the most distant hint, of the baptism of a grown-up child of Christian parents. And why ? but because they had already been baptized as infants, according to the covenant offered to them all, as children of the faithful Abraham ; whose children we also are, and ought to walk in his footsteps, not staggering at the promises of God through unbelief, as we see so many amongst us inclined to do in this matter.

We have hitherto kept entirely to the Scriptures, and have seen how plain and express they are in claiming for Christ all his little ones as part of his flock : and even from their very silence we are confirmed in the same lesson :—but,

7. There is an argument, not indeed from Scripture, but from common sense, which will prove that infant baptism prevailed in the time of the Apostles, as well as ever since.

The argument, which every one who is capable of weighing evidence, will allow to form a moral certainty that infants were baptized in those times, is this ; we have writings and histories from the first preaching of the Gospel, down to the present day, in which all heresies, all innovations are recorded, with the time of their rise. How is it, if infant baptism were not practised in the time of the Apostles, how is it, that it is never mentioned when it began? An innovation of this importance, as soon as ever it sprung up, would have been written upon, observed upon, and could never have been introduced without much discussion. Yet we no where find any such. How can this possibly be accounted for, but on this one supposition, that the practice had always been from the time of the Apostles? When it first was objected to we know : it was only about three hundred years ago. The objection, like every other novelty or heresy, attracted notice immediately, and from the very beginning. But who ever heard of objections to infant baptism before that time? And can any reason be given to account for it but this, that there never was a time from the first preaching of the Gospel, that the practice was a novelty? It was in use in the apostolic age, and continued henceforth unto the present day from the apostolic practice and sanction.

This is an argument from common sense alone. There is another observation which all humble-minded anabaptists would do well to take into their consideration. When they object to infant baptism, why are they so positive, that they, the few in number, and for the most part the inferior in education and the means of knowledge, are right, and all other Christians without exception wrong? Especially when they see that the practice of the Apostolic Churches is against them; that all the early Churches throughout the whole world, widely as they are separated from one another, are all against them, and that without any exception; and, I do not fear to add, when they see that with one unanimous voice, the most learned, the wisest, the holiest Christians of the present day are all against them: surely then it would be well for them to listen with somewhat more attention to those who assure them, that the Scriptures also are against them. It is very certain, that there are no Scripture truths which do not meet with opponents; as the Apostle tells us, "there must be heresies amongst us, that those who are approved, may be made manifest" (1 Cor. x. 19). And yet it seems a strange inconsistency, that those who profess to be "by faith the children of the faithful Abraham," to be grafted into that stock, and to take him for their pattern and example, should stagger at the promises of God, in that very particular, in which his faith is so much commended when "the Scripture preached before the Gospel unto him" (Gal. iii. 8). He

looked for justification by the righteousness which is of faith, even as we profess to do. He received the seal of that covenant by circumcision, even as we do by baptism, "the circumcision that is made without hands" (Col. ii. 11), and he, according to God's commandment, sealed his children also with that seal, as members admitted to that covenant, which covenant is no other than the Christian. And yet men are to be found professing his faith, and refusing nevertheless to admit their children to a blessing which God has declared to belong to them by birthright. Considering the solemn and awful terms in which the Almighty has spoken respecting disobedience in this matter, it will become a matter of wisdom as well as duty for them well to weigh, whether they do not render themselves liable to the curse which He has denounced against every soul that despised that covenant.

But besides this error, respecting the baptism of infants, there is also a strong objection taken by some, not only against the baptism itself, but also against our more usual mode of performing it. Many insist upon it, that the only proper way is by dipping or immersing.

Now it is very certain,

II. That nothing is directed in the Scripture respecting the mode of baptizing, whether by dipping, sprinkling, or pouring, and it is perfectly immaterial which of these three is adopted.

The eager dispute which has arisen upon this subject, is a singular and curious instance of the

disposition men have, to be most confident and most pertinacious upon those very points which are merely matters of opinion, and must in consequence always remain extremely doubtful, because they admit neither of evidence nor proof. If, as we proposed at our setting out, we take the Scriptures alone as our guide and authority, there cannot be anything absolutely and positively determined from them, as they give no fixed rule or definite direction upon the subject; and I believe, that any one, who attentively considers the various passages in which baptism is mentioned, either directly or incidentally, without attempting to strain them to any preconceived notion of his own, will come to the conclusion, that the mode of administering it was not uniform or intended to be so, but varying with circumstances, convenience, or necessity. There are many passages which are consistent with any of the three modes above mentioned, and therefore decide nothing on the subject. There is one, and; I believe, only one, expression which is really relied upon as a proof that dipping was the usual practice: and again, on the other hand, there are several accounts of baptism performed, in which we may be sure that they were not by dipping, but either by sprinkling or pouring. I wish to show nothing more than that we are left by the Scripture at entire liberty upon the subject, and merely claim that what the Apostles allowed as sufficient in their days, be permitted also in these.

Let us then examine the passages which are

usually brought forward in the discussion of this question.

When John baptized in Jordan, there is nothing to prove that any immersion took place. It is said in our translation that "Jesus went up straightway *out of the water*" (Matt. iii. 16). The literal translation is, "Jesus went up straightway *from the water*;" ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέβη εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος: which expression does not imply either in Greek or English that He had been in it: and far less that He had been under it; though perhaps it is not inconsistent with either supposition; and that is all that can be said respecting it. So again, it is written that "John was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John iii. 23). The reason literally is, because there were *many waters* there: ὕδατα πολλά; equivalent to saying, it was a well-watered country; and certainly when such immense multitudes went out to him from all parts ("all men came to him"), it would be very convenient for his purpose that water should be everywhere at hand; but after all, it leaves the question of dipping just as it was before.

So in the account of the baptism of the eunuch by Philip, there is nothing to show whether it was by dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling; as far as the narrative itself goes, it is perhaps rather against dipping; the water (τὸ ὕδωρ) into which they both went down was probably only a shallow brook, and they could easily walk into it, not having on, according to the custom of the country,

either shoes or stockings ; and then how natural that Philip should take water in the hollow of his hand and pour it on the eunuch's head ! This mode of baptism the eunuch would understand, as he had just been reading of Christ at the end of the 52nd chapter of Isaiah, " He shall sprinkle many nations." It is plain they were put to no trouble or inconvenience on the subject, since the new convert immediately went on his way rejoicing ; and nothing is said, either of himself or Philip's drying or changing their dress. In this, however, as in the former cases, the narrative is not sufficiently in detail to enable us to come to any positive decision on the subject.

Let us now consider what I believe is the only expression ever really relied upon as showing that immersion is directed in Scripture. " Being buried with him by " or " in baptism." The two places in which these expressions are met with are these : (Rom. vi. 4) " We are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." And again : (Col. ii. 12) " Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here, it is usual to say, is a proof that baptism was performed by immersion ; for the likeness intended is between our Lord's being buried in the earth and rising again, and a person's being plunged under water and taken out. This, however, as Owen

justly observes*, would be to make one outward sign the sign of another: if we make our dipping under water to be a partaking of the burial of Christ, we are then buried with Him not spiritually but carnally, which is totally foreign to the purport and aim of the Apostle's argument in these places. The utmost that can be said of this expression is, that if dipping under water were a frequent mode of baptizing, it probably suggested the burial of Christ to the Apostle's mind; but it forms no part of his argument, for we are equally dead with Christ, buried with Him, and risen with Him, in every sense that St. Paul means to affirm, whatever be the mode of baptizing made use of. For he is here speaking of baptism as the admission seal into a new covenant; "the circumcision made without hands" (Col. ii. 10); the seal and pledge of the spiritual benefits which follow from the death of Christ, and the application of them to our own souls in a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; blessings which can only proceed from the efficacy of the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." And keeping this in view, we shall then see what is the force and meaning of the Apostle's argument in these places.

Christ is the head and beginning of a new creation; the first born of every creature, and whatever is wrought in us by way of grace has been first exemplified in Him: for we are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son" (Rom.

* Pneumatologia, vol. ii. p. 325.

viii. 29). It is so in all things which God works in us, in agreement with that typical commandment to Moses, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was showed to thee on the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). Thus we are said to be "one with Christ, and Christ with us;" to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory;" to be "renewed after his likeness;" to be "planted together in the likeness of his death;" to be "in the likeness of his resurrection," being made "conformable unto his death," and so "to be dead with Christ." But this conformity or likeness is not in suffering death as He did; for this death is to take place within us, whilst we are living in this world. It is our own natural life of sin which is to be destroyed, that sin may die in us, and we become dead to sin, and this through the efficacy and in virtue of his death; and it is very certain that in whomsoever the death of Christ is not the death of sin, that man can have nothing in Christ.

So with respect to being in the likeness of his resurrection; this is not a resurrection of the body from the grave, but a resurrection in this world to newness and holiness of life. And since baptism is the appointed means of our entrance into the Christian covenant, we are said to be "baptized into his death," that is, into the power and efficacy of it, so that we become "dead with him," "buried with him," and "risen again with him." Now it is evident, since our death and resurrection are here used, not in a literal, but a spiritual

sense, so must our burial also be similarly understood: being buried as to all carnal and worldly affections and desires, and removed from their view and presence. But surely, to say that we are partakers of the death and resurrection of Christ, because we are dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness, and then to add, that we are also partakers of the burial of Christ, because we have been put under water, as He was put under ground, is to make nonsense of the passage, and confound together things which the Apostle never intended to compare. St. Paul's argument is very exact and harmonious throughout, illustrating our mystical death, burial, and resurrection, by the death, burial, and resurrection of our blessed Lord; dead, indeed, unto sin, buried as to worldly cares, carnal pleasures, and the old Adam, but alive henceforth unto God, through our vital union with Jesus Christ, of which our baptism is the pledge and seal. We are no more buried with Christ by being dipped under water, than we are raised with Him by being lifted out of it. The Apostle is speaking solely of a spiritual death, burial, and resurrection, and his argument holds equally good in whatever form we may suppose baptism to have been administered, whether by dipping, pouring, or sprinkling. He may be, and probably is, alluding to one way in which baptism was frequently performed, but to urge from this passage that he insists upon dipping, as otherwise we are not buried with Christ in baptism, is to give his words a meaning which they were never intended

to convey, and sets aside the spiritual application of his argument. Indeed, if dipping were thus an essential and necessary part of Christian baptism, we may be sure that, in the Apostles' presence at least, and under their sanction, it would never have been performed in any other way; which we shall presently show was assuredly not the case.

Some have taken another ground, and said that baptism ought, as a matter of course, to be by dipping, for that is the proper meaning of the word baptize: and I believe there are those who carry their notions on this subject so far, as to have withdrawn themselves from the Bible Society, because the word baptism is used instead of dipping. The meaning of a word, in any author, is the sense in which he himself uses it. Now in the New Testament, there is no one passage in which the word "baptize" can, with any certainty, be declared to mean "dip," and there are many in which it certainly has not that meaning, but the "baptism" was performed in some other manner, of which I will give a few instances.

And first, in cases which do not refer to Christian baptism. It is written (Mark vii. 4), "And when they come from the markets, except they *baptize*, they eat not; and many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the *baptism* of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables," or rather "couches", on which they reclined at their meals. And so again (Luke xi. 38), "They marvelled that he had not first baptized before dinner." Now we know how these baptisms were

performed; for instance, we see it stated (John ii. 6), "There were set six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews." And so again, with respect to the baptism of the hands, "holding the tradition of the elders," how was that performed? We read (2 Kings iii. 11), of "Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water upon the hands of Elijah as he sat at meat." These are instances in which baptism was certainly not intended to mean dipping. So again (Heb. ix, 10), St. Paul speaking of the temple services, says, "They stood only in meats and drinks, and divers baptisms, and carnal ordinances." Here we know also, that these baptisms were certainly not dippings: as, for instance, "Thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them, *sprinkle* water of purification upon them." (Numb. viii. 7).

The same observation extends to passages in which baptism is incidentally mentioned as belonging to the Christian dispensation. Thus, referring to the baptism with the Holy Ghost, we read repeatedly such expressions as these: "I will *pour out* my Spirit unto you" (Prov. i. 23). "I will *pour out* my Spirit upon thy seed" (Isaiah xliv. 3). "I will *pour out* my Spirit upon all flesh." "Upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I *pour out* my Spirit" (Joel ii. 28, 29). So again (Acts x. 44) "on the Gentiles also was *poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost." We have also (Matt. iii. 11), an express prophecy, and (Acts ii. 3, 4) the express

fulfilment of it. The prophecy was, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." How was this fulfilled? Is there anything in the manner of it which would suggest the notion of dipping? We read, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and sat upon each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost."

Yet further, there is another set of passages which would incline us to think that the Scriptures allude to sprinkling, as the mode of performing Christian baptism. As, for instance, where it is spoken of prophetically: "So shall he sprinkle many nations" (Isaiah lii. 15). "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27). This is evidently a prophecy of Christian baptism; the outward visible sign by water, the inward spiritual grace in a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness. But here the water baptism is represented by sprinkling, and, following out the completion of this prophecy as it is given us in the New Testament, we see the same image still retained. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 22). "According to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord." Again, St. Paul tells the Jews, that "all their fathers

were baptized in the cloud and in the sea," having passed under the cloud and through the sea (1 Cor. x. 1, 2). Now how was this baptism performed, but by sprinkling from the mist of the cloud and the spray of the sea? To say, with this passage before us, that there can be no baptism except by dipping, is to put the disobedient Egyptians in the place of the covenanted Israel.

I do not bring forward these instances as proving that baptism was always in Scripture times performed by pouring or sprinkling; but only to show, that nothing being any where distinctly asserted as to the precise manner in which it was to be performed, if we collect from the Scriptures the incidental allusions to it, we shall find it oftener referred to as a pouring or sprinkling than any other mode. I believe myself that it is of no consequence whatever, whether it be any one of the three more usual ways. The essential part of the rite is, that water be used, and the baptism be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But if there be any who think that the manner of performing it is of great consequence, as do the anabaptists, it would be well for them seriously to weigh on what slight circumstances their convictions rest. They ought to learn from that consideration to be more tolerant in matters of such uncertainty, and not endeavour to enforce as a duty what the Scriptures themselves are silent upon; for we see that they decide nothing respecting this point, and the inference to be drawn from incidental expres-

sions, as far as they go, is rather against them than for them. At any rate, if they still continue fixed in their opinion upon this subject, if they still persevere in condemning all that do not agree with them, and deny the validity of every baptism which is not performed in accordance with their notions, do not let them say that their decision is founded upon Scripture testimony; for the word of God has certainly laid down no rule upon the subject, but has apparently left it as a matter to be determined with respect to its outward form, according to the convenience of circumstances, the difference of climates, the peculiar customs and habits of life which prevail amongst various nations.

We shall find this view of the subject established by looking at the circumstances attending the few instances of baptism which are related in the Scripture. We shall see that out of these few, there are some which *may* have been performed by immersion, though it cannot positively be affirmed from any thing said of them, that they certainly were so; and there are some, which any person of common sense will at once say never could have been performed in that manner; and yet, some of these last were performed by the Apostles themselves.

Our Lord's baptism in Jordan, and the other baptisms by John the Baptist, and by our Lord's disciples before his ascension, and the eunuch's by Philip, determine nothing upon this point. For all that appears, they might have been performed

in any of these modes. But there are some other instances, in which I suppose no person, except under the influence of very violent prejudice, will believe that the baptism could have been by dipping.

Thus in the Acts of the Apostles (ch. ii. 41), "They that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day were added unto them about three thousand souls." This was in Jerusalem itself; and who would have dared or been permitted to enter into any of the public aqueducts, or reservoirs, to be dipped therein? Had they so ventured, they would most assuredly have been stoned by the people. For all the public waters of ancient cities were most carefully guarded against what would have been considered such an extreme pollution. We see a proof of the horror which such conduct would inspire in the case of Nero, the Roman emperor; who having bathed in the Marsian aqueduct, one of those which supplied Rome with water, and having afterwards been suddenly seized with a fever, it was considered by the public as a judgment upon him for this pollution of the water. (Tacit. Annal. xiv. 22.) And it is perfectly out of all reason to fancy that these three thousand converts could have found in Jerusalem any waters in which they could have been baptized by dipping. Now if this be so, if in this one case, baptism was performed by the Apostles with pouring out or sprinkling; this important consequence follows at once, that the question is resolved into a matter

of expediency or convenience. What the Apostles have done in such a case, we may do. Their example is at once a sufficient warrant for our practice.

Again, when Cornelius, with his kinsmen and near friends, were assembled to hear Peter, and the Holy Ghost had fallen upon them, Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" Here the expression would evidently lead us to suppose, that water was brought for the purpose of their being baptized with it. It seems to have taken place at once upon the spot, and therefore the probability is greatly in favour of its having been performed in some other way than by immersion.

So again in the case of the jailer at Philippi, the night that he was converted, "*the same hour* was he baptized, with all his, straightway;" and that in the prison itself; for it was afterwards that he brought them into his house. Now, who that knows any thing of the public prisons of those days, will believe that this baptism was by immersion, or that any convenience for such purpose could have been found therein? When Jugurtha, cast naked into the Mamertine prison, there to perish, exclaimed, "How cold this bath of yours!" we might as well believe that he was speaking of a literal bath, as that any immersion took place on this occasion.

So again, of St. Paul's baptism, it takes place in the lodgings where he was. Ananias visits him in his chamber, lays his hands upon him, and

baptizes him, using these words, "Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Here, when the circumstances of the case are considered, how very little likely is it that he could have been dipped! The probability is all against it; and certainly there is not a single incident in the narrative, to afford the least ground for supposing that any such ceremony was performed.

Let any one well weigh all these instances, and can he refrain from the reflexion, how sad it is to see the violence, the pertinacity, the want of charity, with which people argue and dispute about a point which is thus left undecided in the Scriptures? An indifferent matter, a matter upon which there is no certainty whatever from the word of God, is made a cause for dividing Christians into different sects and parties; nay, in many cases, is carried to this extreme length of intolerance and want of charity, that numbers are found to deny the validity of all baptism which has not been administered by immersion; and, as a consequence, they deny the right of all but themselves to be considered as real members of the body of Christ. And since there is no visible admission into his kingdom but by baptism, they thus sweep out of his Church nearly the whole of the present generation, with many entire generations of every people, nation, and language, who have been professing Christ from the beginning, but, according to this anabaptist teaching, have never been really baptized into his name. Such is their

intolerance and want of charity. And upon what foundation does such doctrine rest? Clearly upon the notions and fancies of men, without any warrant from the word of God; for that we see directs nothing, and attaches no importance to the manner in which it is performed. And for this also we are furnished with a sufficient reason. The washing of baptism is not the cleansing of the filth of the flesh, but typical of the washing away of sin. To attach the benefit to the actual use and application of the water itself, is to fall into St. Peter's error, when he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head." Whereas our Lord told him, that by the partial washing he had received, "he was clean every whit."

The practice of the Church seems to be the most enlightened and the most tolerant with regard to this subject, and therefore the most Christian in spirit, leaving the baptism to be performed in whichever way the parents prefer. The Church knows that the Scripture does not decide the point, and therefore she also leaves it undecided, so that each one of her members may act according to his own opinion.

Upon the whole, therefore, we may affirm these two things confidently, because we have proved them evidently; one is, that the Scripture *does not* lay down any fixed and definite rule as to the mode in which the water is to be used in baptism. Who will venture to assert that it does, in the face of the examples that have been produced to the

contrary? The other is, that the Scripture *does* direct the admission of infants into the Christian covenant. The covenant, that is, "of the righteousness which is by faith;" and this both before and after the coming of Christ. If that warning of God to Abraham was to be heard and obeyed by Jewish parents, "The uncircumcised manchild . . . that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant," surely, it is equally perilous for Christian parents to set at nought that warning of Christ: "Verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

THE END.



